

to introduce me and shake hands with me and she thought about me meeting President Kennedy, she realized she could do anything. That's true for the rest of you, so go out and do it. Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:40 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to student Jimmi Lampley, who introduced the President, and Ricky Nicks, principal, Earle Senior High School; J.B. Crumbley, superintendent, Earle School District; Leon Phillips, superintendent,

Lake View School District; State Representative Steve Jones; Lt. Gov. Winthrop P. Rockefeller of Arkansas; Raymond J. Simon, director, Arkansas Department of Education; Mayor Sherman Smith of Earle; Crittenden County Judge Brian Williams; Robert M. Powell, president and chief executive officer, USA Truck, Inc.; N.S. (Ness) Sechrest, long-time friend of the President; Bishop L.T. Walker, Church of God in Christ; and Ron Paige, former minister, Little Rock Church of God in Christ, and his wife, Carrie.

The President's Radio Address *December 11, 1999*

Good morning. The holidays are upon us, and across our Nation families and friends are gathering to celebrate the season. Today I want to talk about the steps we must take to make sure the food at these festivities, indeed, the food we serve every day, is the safest in the world.

For 7 years now, our administration has worked hard to strengthen our food safety standards for the 21st century. We've made significant strides by using the newest research and best technology available. We're using new, science-based standards for meat, poultry, and seafood. We've updated our standards for fruit and vegetable juices. We also established a nationwide early warning system for food-borne illness to catch problems sooner and prevent them from happening in the first place. We're making new advances each year, and are committed to moving forward on all fronts.

But the holiday season is only our latest reminder. When it comes to what we feed our families, there's really no such thing as too safe. We know certain foods carry a special risk for children, for the elderly, for those with weakened immune systems. My Council on Food Safety has identified eggs as one of those foods.

Every year, about 3.3 million eggs are infected with salmonella bacteria. This causes about 300,000 cases of illness. And when infected eggs still make it from the farm to the table, we know we have more work to do. That's why today I am taking new action on food safety to cut in half, over the next 5 years, the number of salmonella cases attributed to eggs. And our

goal is to eliminate these cases entirely by 2010. This aggressive action plan permits egg producers and processors to choose between two strategies of safety. The first happens at the farm, where extensive tests and rigorous practices will help prevent infected eggs from ever reaching your local grocery. The second happens at the packing plant, where new technologies like in-shell pasteurization will help keep eggs safe and free of bacteria.

I'm also announcing new steps to keep unsafe food imports outside our borders and out of our marketplace. We Americans are eating more imported food than ever, more than double the amount we consumed just 7 years ago. It used to be that only a dozen fruits and vegetables were available year round. Now it's common to find as many as 400 varieties, whether in the heat of summer or the chill of winter. Now, we have no reason to believe imported food is any less safe than the food we grow at home. But after several outbreaks of illnesses were traced to imported food, I directed the Department of Treasury and the Department of Health and Human Services to take action against unsafe imported food and to better protect our consumers. Today they're responding with a comprehensive plan. It set forth steps to prevent so-called port shopping so unsafe food stopped at one port can't find another way into our country. Customs and the FDA will also stamp rejected food with a clear label—"The United

States—Refused”—and step up our policy of destroying imported food that poses a serious threat to people’s health.

Food safety is part of our citizens’ basic contract with the Government. Any food that fails to meet clear and strict standards for safety should not make it to the marketplace; it’s just that simple. With the actions we’re taking today, our families can have the peace of mind they deserve every holiday season, and, indeed, every day of the year.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:35 p.m. on December 10 in classroom 57 at the Earle Senior High School for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 11. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 10 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks to the Florida State Democratic Convention in Orlando, Florida December 11, 1999

Thank you very much. Thank you. Now, folks, you all sit down now. Can you sit down? I’m a little hoarse, so I can’t shout you down, and you won’t be able to hear unless you sit down and relax here.

First of all, I want to thank my good friend Charlie Whitehead for inviting me here and for being willing to take the reins of this party again. I came here in 1981, 1983, 1987, 1991; only Arkansas have I visited the Democratic Convention more than I have in the State of Florida, and I thank you very much.

I want to thank Representatives Hastings, Brown, Meeks; former Congressman Smith; the wonderful Lieutenant Governor of Maryland and I think the finest Lieutenant Governor in the United States, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, who spoke to you earlier today. And I want to say how proud I am that a person who has been a friend of mine a long time is going to be your next United States Senator, Bill Nelson. And Grace Nelson, thank you very much for your interest.

I also asked if Rhea Chiles was still here. It was almost exactly a year ago that Lawton Chiles passed away, and like his family and his friends and his beloved Floridians, I want you to know I still miss him. He was my friend. He was my mentor. He was my ally. His legacy is alive and well in the good things he did in Florida and the good things that we’re doing in the United States. And I’m honored to be here.

Now, let me tell you, I know you probably noticed we’re about to get into an election sea-

son here—[laughter]—and you may have noticed that I can’t run for anything this year. [Laughter] So I want to tell you how come I came down here.

First of all, it was almost 8 years ago exactly when the Democratic Convention of Florida in December of 1991 put my campaign on the map. And I came to say thank you. With your help, when I was running fifth in the polls nationally, we won a decisive victory over a majority in the straw poll here in 1991. It was the first evidence that Democrats were ready to take America in a new direction. And I got to thinking about that last night and this morning. You were very wonderful to me, but I also want you to know you were a hard sell. [Laughter]

I don’t know how many times I’ve talked to Jeff Eller and Craig Smith, who were among those who worked this convention for me, and Hillary and I remember how dog-tired we were when we got back to our hotel room after the speech, and then we had to go and visit all these caucuses. We must have gone to a dozen caucuses. And we were asked the most detailed questions over the most wide array of issues, and I just hope you’re putting this crowd this year through this. That’s all I want to say. [Laughter] It was unbelievable.

But I must say, you know, I had been coming here—I remember when then-Governor, now Senator Bob Graham invited me in ’81 and ’83 and ’87—I loved this convention, and I loved that experience in ’91. I love your energy, your intensity, your commitment, your caring about the issues and the future of this State and this